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Abstract

In light of recent developments, the historical record of the German Democratic Republic will be closely reexamined as the two Germanies merge into one country. Christoph Hein's novel *Horns Ende* undoubtedly will play a role in the debate about the GDR past, because it is a clear repudiation of official historical mythmaking. The novel examines in detail the political and social fiber of a small town in the GDR during the fifties. Horn returns to the town some thirty years after his death, and entices the townspeople to recount their lives during the early years of the socialist republic. These recollections initiate a dialogue between author, reader and the townspeople. The outcome of these exchanges is a skillful dissection of the effects of Stalinism on ordinary citizens, and it revises perceptions of a period in GDR history that officially had been touted as politically and socially harmonious. Hein challenges the reader to reconstruct a historical record that more closely reflects the experiences of ordinary people, and in doing so he exposes past official historical mythmaking. He is convinced that a society's survival is dependent upon the accuracy of its history; historical revision therefore must not be left to those in power.

Keywords

German Democratic Republic, GDR, two Germanies, Germanies, Christoph Hein, Horns Ende, past, mythmaking, political, social, fifties, 50s, death, socialist republic, dialogue, author, reader, townspeople, Stalinism, reconstruct, mythmaking, history, perspective

Christoph Hein's *Horns Ende*: Historical Revisionism—A Process of Renewal

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Historians as well as writers in the German Democratic Republic have long recognized that the history of the GDR has yet to be written, because much of the official history remains a composite of ideological mythmaking. Recent developments in the German Democratic Republic will accelerate the process of historical revisionism, and the term "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to grips with the past) will take on a more complex meaning now that the Berlin Wall has come down. The historical record, which had already been scrutinized in recent years by both historians and writers in the GDR will now be examined and re-examined as people who were previously excluded from participation join the discussion. Literary works in the German Democratic Republic will undoubtedly play a significant role in setting both the tone of the debate about the past and in providing a broad spectrum of viewpoints about past political, social and economic developments in the GDR. Helga Königsdorf commented recently about the role of literature in defining the past: "Wenn man später wissen will, wie es gewesen ist, in dieser DDR, wird man es vor allem aus der Literatur erfahren. Oder besser, man wird erfahren wie es auch gewesen ist"(14).[1] She acknowledges the primary role that GDR poets and writers have played in providing a significant, even if not entirely adequate, repository of information about life in the German Democratic Republic. Despite its shortcomings, the literary record will be more reliable in assessing the past than either media or official historical accounts.

In varying degrees writers and historians in the GDR have challenged the official concept of history of the German Democratic Republic. In much of his fiction, Christoph Hein, one of the prominent GDR writers, has engaged his readers in a dialogue about the necessity for an accurate historical account. In his latest novel, *Horns*

Ende (1985), he examines in detail the political and social fiber of a small town in the GDR during the fifties. In a series of recollections, people recount their lives in the early years of the socialist republic. The novel initiates a dialogue between author, reader, and townspeople. These dialogues evolve into a skillful dissection of the effects of Stalinism on the lives of ordinary citizens. The outcome of these exchanges is a revised perception of a period in GDR history that officially had been touted as politically and socially harmonious.

As mentioned above, the history of the German Democratic Republic has frequently served as a literary source for GDR writers. The *Aufbauromane*, *Ankunftsromane*, and the *Alltagsliteratur* of the fifties and sixties are testimony to this fact. Thematically these novels dealt with the heroic feats of resistance fighters, the fates of those who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, and, most frequently, with the enormous physical task of building a new socialist society upon the rubble left by the war. The newly-emerging socialist state's preoccupation with ideological and economic struggles compelled writers to construct characters that were to function as role models for the workers and peasants. Their physical strength and ideological purity provided examples for those of lesser conviction to follow. In the *Aufbauromane* these positive heroes, one-dimensional in purpose and superhuman in character, reflected most directly the GDR's pursuit of an ideological and national identity. The concerns of the individual played a role secondary to the needs of society.

In the *Ankunftsromane* and in literary depictions of everyday GDR life in the sixties, the balance shifts slightly in favor of showing the integration of the individual into the socialist society. Shortcomings and overly zealous behavior on the part of party officials and difficulties along the path to socialism provide the reader with glimpses of potential conflicts, which are in the end resolved in favor of the community as a whole. Thus the continuing emphasis on successes of the community militated against the treatment of characters and themes that explored the psychological strains, tensions, and failures within an evolving socialist society. Those few works that did explore such strains met with a chilling reception. Christa Wolf's novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) (*The Quest for Christa T.*), published in the GDR in only limited editions, was heavily criticized by establishment critics for its deeply emotional and personal recollection of the past. Similarly, Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1971) (*The New Sufferings of Young W.*) was

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criticized for centering too much on the inner experiences of one teenage boy. In these examples and others like them socialist realism had departed significantly from its original intent. This cautious shift in favor of the individual allowed for a tentative reexamination of the past, but much ideological mythmaking persisted, resulting in a cumulative unreliable historical record.

Nevertheless, despite the ideological treatment of history in many of the earlier GDR novels, contemporary writers in the German Democratic Republic continue to explore new and innovative ways of dealing with the relatively brief history of the GDR. Like GDR historians, GDR writers of the eighties seek to revise earlier history by essentially avoiding ideological heroism and assessing the past in ways that mirror more closely historical reality.

In the late seventies and early eighties a large number of novels appeared that highlighted particular social problems within the GDR as viewed from the perspective of the individual. *Meine ungeborenen Kinder* (1982) (*My Unborn Children*) by Charlotte Worgitzky is a woman's account of her many abortions going back to the time when abortions were illegal in the GDR. In *Die Chance des Mannes* (1982) (*The Chance of the Man*) by Günter Görlich, a wife suddenly leaves her husband after many years of marriage and thereby recaptures her lost identity and independence. Günter De Bruyn's *Die neue Herrlichkeit* (1984) (*The New Splendor*) deals in part with the lack of commitment on the part of the younger generation toward care of the elderly. On the other hand, *Das Bild des Vaters* (1982) (*The Image of the Father*) by Jurij Brezan shows the loving relationship between father and son in the last days of the father's life. In each of these novels, the individual no longer merely represents some larger ideological purpose. The emphasis is now placed upon the struggle faced by people in a complex industrial society, which happens incidentally to be socialist.

Compared with the earlier treatment of the immediate GDR past, such contemporary prose pieces as *Alpträume aus der Provinz* (1984) (*Nightmares from the Province*) by Rosemarie Zeplin, Günther Rücker's short story collections *Herr von Oe. und Hilde das Dienstmädchen* (1984), and *Anton Popper und andere Erzählungen* (1985), and, most recently, Christoph Hein's *Horns Ende* (1985) convey historical images that reflect more accurately the GDR reader's experiences during a time of struggle and hardship. Individual heroic deeds give way to an assessment and survey of the past

that might actually help the GDR reader come to terms with the present. Rosemarie Zeplin depicts the confinement of bourgeois life before and during the war as experienced by a young woman, not in ideological but rather in emotional and psychological terms. And Rücker's stories center on individuals who must cope during a time of upheaval. Thus, the emphasis of earlier prose on ideological and national identity shifted to a more critical examination of interpersonal relationships and of how these experiences have contributed to the development of contemporary GDR society.

In Christoph Hein's much discussed first novel *Der fremde Freund*, (1982) (*The Estranged Friend*) or, as it is called in the West, *Drachenblut* (*Dragon's Blood*), alienation within a socialist society is the central issue. The main character in this novel feels no need to be emotionally tied to anyone. She communicates with others only on a superficial basis and avoids all relationships that might demand commitment. Only the past memory of a childhood friend arouses a brief genuine emotional response. Historical mediation appears to be the only means by which she can recapture a glimpse of her humanity. A self-imposed capsule insulates and isolates her from the contemporary world. Here a view of GDR society is offered from a more intensely critical and even more personal perspective than had been the case in previous novels.

Christoph Hein's latest novel, *Horns Ende*, (1985) is the preeminent example of such a re-examination of the past. Hein's interest in the relationship between history and the individual is already evident in his early works. To provide more intimate historical insights Hein used well-known historical figures (Cromwell and Lassalle) to show the interaction between their private lives and events of the day. In his commentary on his drama *Cromwell* (1981) Hein observes: "unser Interesse an der englischen Geschichte ist das Interesse an uns. Geschichtsbewußtsein ist egozentrisch, man will seine Väter kennenlernen, um sich zu erfahren"(39).[2] Furthermore, Hein's works oscillate between the past and the present, as Manfred Behn-Liebherz points out: "Hein geht mit seinen Stoffen in die Geschichte, kommt in der Gegenwart wieder an, greift noch weiter zurück und ist doch immer in der Gegenwart: Jetztzeit wird verhandelt"(3).[3]

In *Horns Ende*, the focus shifts to GDR history. Some thirty years after his mysterious death Horn returns to the town of Guldenberg and carries out what amounts to an archeological expedition, the purpose of which is to reconstruct the past through an examination of

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verbal rather than physical artifacts. Under the guise of attempting to find the reasons for his death, Horn entices various townspeople, some prominent and others less so, to recollect the social and political circumstances at the time of his death in the fifties in a small village in the GDR. Guldenberg, as the name implies, is a community within a supposedly socialist society composed of citizens whose values and attitudes are still deeply rooted in the old bourgeois order. Horn's return marks the start of the reconstruction of past events that until then had been distorted by ideological mythmaking.

Horn's demise is closely tied to his unwavering interest in seeking the truth about a community consumed by the pursuit of prestige, power and economic well-being. His sentiments are best expressed in his comments on his work as museum curator to the then young Thomas: "Sieh dich nur um. Das alles ist sehr alt. Zu alt, um noch zu lügen. Ein paar Steine, ein paar Scherben, aber die Wahrheit. Das ist nicht wenig. Mein Junge"(57).[4] And shortly thereafter, he conveys to his young assistant the serious implications of constructing an accurate historical record: "Die Wahrheit oder die Lüge, das ist eine entsetzliche Verantwortung. Wer das wirklich begriffen hätte, würde keinen Schlaf mehr finden"(58).[5] So Horn sets out to reconstruct the past by returning thirty years after his death to collect these seemingly simple stories, often verging on gossip. Their arrangement conveys a complex social and political kaleidoscope that transcends the purely personal. Individually, these bits and pieces of truth seem insignificant, but together they constitute a revision of the historical record of the fifties.

The novel demonstrates effectively the interaction between the personal and the public realm. On one level, it provides insight into the possible causes of the strained and failed personal relationships of those recalling the past. On another level, the characters, in recalling their past as eyewitnesses, reveal themselves and thereby show the effects of the past on the present-day socialist society.

The structure of the novel complements the dialectical aspects of its message. The demands made on the reader are substantial. With each appearance and reappearance of the various characters the reader must continually reevaluate the highly personal testimony, and distill out the larger social implications. Although they tell their stories chronologically, Hein does not permit the reader the luxury of reading them as such, because one character's testimony comes to an abrupt halt and then the next character continues his or her story.

Thus the reader is forced by a process of assimilation to reconstruct a historical record based on ever-changing evidence. The novel attempts to simulate the internal dynamics of a socialist society rather than trying to chart individual characters' actions and motivations. Unfortunately, the images conveyed fail to reinforce the ideological rhetoric of a society moving ever forward toward communism. Instead, fragmented bits of information point to a past devoid of vitality and vigor. And only Horn's incessant plea to set the record straight offers some limited hope for the future. The novel sets out to tell the whole story of this sleepy GDR town. Horn represents Christoph Hein's own commitment to writing a history that is all inclusive: "Selbstverständlich wäre eine Geschichtsbetrachtung, die sich lediglich auf die durchaus nicht zufälligen 'weißen Flecken' unserer Geschichte richtet, mehr als nur unvollständig. Ein solches Geschichtsbild wäre gleichfalls verlogen. Aber wenn diese Warnung nur dazu benutzt wird, um die damit zugegebenen Auslassungen in unserem Geschichtsbild nicht zu korrigieren, weil sonst die Gefahr bestünde, 'die ganze Wahrheit zu verletzen', so ist das Heuchelei und demagogische Scholastik'(13).[6]

The structure also reinforces the notion that history is a composite consisting of disparate bits and pieces of peoples' lives. The sequence in which the characters appear and reappear shows a lack of continuity in their lives and demonstrates how the absence of genuine relationships leads to the overall deterioration of the social structure of the town. Horn's insistent plea in the prologue to each chapter provides a thread that connects the disconnected testimony of the townspeople. He is the catalyst that activates the recall of the past in all its detail, making *Horns Ende* a soul-searching, psychological inquiry that constitutes a reevaluation of the past.

The excessive detail and the personal nature of the testimony by people from various social and economic segments of the town work against a continuance of ideological mythmaking. Gabriele Lindner points out in her review of *Horns Ende*: "Facettenartig entsteht so das faktische und sozialpsychologische Bild einer DDR-Kleinstadt der fünfiziger Jahre. Am Ende setzt sich das Bild zusammen aus differenziert gezeichneten und nur skizzierten Figuren, genau mitgeteilten und bewusst vernebelten Vorgängen"(156).[7] Of interest is the effect the personal behavior of each individual has on the evolution of the larger society.

Horns Ende is, therefore, not at all a tale of the fate of one indi-

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vidual, as the title might suggest. Neither is it an investigation into the causes of Horn's death per se. Horn himself actually plays a secondary role. Instead, the novel centers on the townspeople's interactions with one another (or lack thereof) and on the historical and social consequences of their behavior.

Hein intentionally makes Horn a character who remains on the fringe. He does not fit conveniently into the Guldenberg community. In order to allow Horn to function as the catalyst who promotes communication about the past, Hein draws attention away from the "main" character, a strategy that forces the reader to engage in dialogue with the individual characters. Hein's intent is not to present the reader with lessons or moral statements. Instead, through dialogue he and the reader participate in a public debate and thereby penetrate the banality and routine of daily existence (136).[8] Horn's own testimony is rather limited in scope, and those who are supposed to address the issue of his death digress, giving instead accounts of their own shattered and failed lives. This cumulative body of information goes below the surface and provides a clearer picture of a socialist community in crisis, a community that is no longer really a community, because it has been stagnated due to the inability of any of its members to escape the pettiness of their private lives.

These critical self-appraisals are a composite of human activities that constitutes a slice of history which lacks genuine positive heroes. In fact, it is a rejection of the notion that socialism is built solely by hard physical labor and unwavering ideological commitment. Instead, *Horns Ende* demonstrates that the real sacrifices made during the formative years of a nation were of a personal, psychological nature and that they affected every segment of the population. Historical circumstances, selfishness, and greed, as well as other petty concerns were as much a part of the molding of the new socialist man and woman as was the ideological direction set by the party. Horn's demise serves as a pretext for reconstructing (many years after the fact) the historical circumstances at the time of his death. He in effect returns to serve as father confessor, psychiatrist, and inquisitor in one. His incessant pleas to reconstruct the past in every detail are made not to determine the cause of his death nor to establish the individual or collective guilt of the townspeople, but rather to confront a past that had been obscured by ideological mythmaking. Christa Wolf, in her novel *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), makes a similar case for an accurate preservation of the past and an accurate representation of

its impact on the present: "In die Erinnerung drängt sich die Gegenwart ein, und der heutige Tag ist schon der letzte Tag der Vergangenheit. So würden wir uns unaufhaltsam fremd werden ohne unser Gedächtnis an das, was wir getan haben, an das, was uns zugestossen ist. Ohne unser Gedächtnis an uns selbst"(9–10).[9] Horn's effort to entice the townspeople to tell their story prevents the soul of the community from perishing.

In a recent article in "Die Zeit," Christoph Hein elaborates further on the need for an accurate representation of history. "Speziell hergestellte Filme und eine speziell hergestellte Geschichtsschreibung können uns zwar die Illusion geben, daß alles bestens gedeihe. Aber solche Illusionen sind für uns letzlich tödlich, da sie uns unfähig machen, unsere Gegenwart zu bewältigen"(14).[10] Historical falsification leaves society without any prospect of coming to grips with the present.

The townspeople's confessional is their last opportunity to set the historical record straight, even though that record is marked by mediocrity. Only rarely do signs of courage and heroism surface. Yet the characters, at Horn's urging, seem eager to tell their stories in order to expose their weaknesses and to admit errors in judgement, as if they needed to set down a burden. Never before had they been urged to lay bare their souls, to give their personal, intimate accounts of the past. It was their last will and testament—a way to keep the dead from being forgotten and thereby leave a more complete historical record on which to build a future.

It would, therefore, be inappropriate to view *Horns Ende* solely as an account of the failure and bankruptcy of party policies in the fifties. To be sure, the overly anxious party officials, with their narrow ideological perspective, stifled creativity and contributed to the pervasive provincialism. But they were not responsible for the inability of the townspeople to establish any lasting relationships. The failed relationships between mother and son, father and son, husband and wife, and co-workers were not due to official party constraints but to the inability of people to deal truthfully with one another. Human shortcomings as much as the political environment were responsible for Horn's and the town's stagnation and eventual demise. Hein holds out little promise for historical progress other than the hope that history might provide us with insights that allow us to avoid repeating the same errors. The likelihood of creating a harmonious socialist

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society is largely a utopian dream, and a falsified past extinguishes even that last bit of hope.

Horns Ende is a dissection of the process by which a society renews itself through critical self-evaluation. The confrontation with the apparently ordinary behavior of individual townspeople is a reminder that their actions represent both the failures of the past and the potential for the creation of a better socialist society. Hein seems to say that in order for socialism to attain its full potential, its reliance on ideological romanticism must be replaced by a realistic appraisal of the past. The dialectical process of continued progress toward a communal society is thwarted by any efforts to distort the past, for this leaves to the next generation the dubious task of having to build a future on the shaky foundation of historical myth.

Hein's theater background is evident in the way he patterns the personal recollections so that they bridge the past and the present. Each of the eight chapters of recollections is introduced by a prologue which reestablishes the legitimacy of each ensuing set of disclosures by having Horn plead with Thomas not to treat the past as inconsequential. Horn reminds Thomas in the prologue to chapter six: "Hast du es immer noch nicht begriffen, Junge? Du bist es, der mit den Toten nicht leben kann. Du bist es, der darüber reden muß. Die Toten haben euch vergessen, aber ihr könnt uns nicht vergessen"(165).[11] The clarity with which this theme is presented in each of the prologues legitimizes these disconnected stories as genuine history and underscores the urgency of having the testimony recorded before a whole generation's memories have vanished. Furthermore, the crescendo-like echo embodied in Horn's incessant plea of "erinnere dich" elevates the apparently insignificant bits of information about the people of this insignificant provincial town to dramatic heights not achievable had each character simply told his or her tale chronologically. The implications transcend Guldenberg.

Each character in some fashion attempts to minimize the impact of his or her contribution to the chronicle. Thomas, at the time of Horn's demise only a young boy, claims that his youth disqualifies him as a reliable historical witness. Yet, Horn appears to place the greatest hope in him because he is able to tell the truth precisely because he was so innocent. Thomas' account is therefore least contaminated by selfish interest. In his struggle to escape the tyranny of his father, Thomas seeks out those people in the town who give him a

sense of what a creative life might be like. His recollections are a search for his identity, and they exhibit the naïveté of an innocent onlooker who does not fully comprehend the implications of the actions taken by the adults with whom he comes into contact. It turns out that Thomas' reluctance to tell his story contributes to the validity of his often surprising revelations about the psychological and social landscape of this small GDR town in the fifties.

Kruschkatz, the mayor, wants to dismiss the whole effort of recalling the past as useless, undoubtedly because an accurate historical account would show his personal and public behavior in something less than the best light. Those who exercise political power are rarely interested in having an accurate record kept for posterity. He makes this point quite clear when he says: "Es gibt keine Geschichte, denn soviel wir auch an Bausteinchen um eine vergangene Zeit ansammeln, wir ordnen und beleben diese kleinen Tonscherben und schwärzlichen Fotos allein mit unserem Atem, verfälschen sie durch die Unvernunft unserer dünnen Köpfe und mißverstehen daher gründlich. Der Mensch schuf sich die Götter, um mit der Unerträglichkeit des Todes leben zu können, und er schuf sich die Fiktion der Geschichte, um den Verlust der Zeit einen Sinn zu geben, der ihm das Sinnlose verstehbar und erträglich macht"(21).[12] Kruschkatz wants to deny history, but is preoccupied with reconstructing the past so that his feelings of guilt might be somewhat alleviated. He had accused Horn of ideological impurity, and an accurate historical account would show Kruschkatz as an ideologue whose prime interest is not the welfare of those in the community but rather the preservation of his own political power. He had attempted to eliminate Horn because philosophically the two were adversaries. Horn sees the salvation of the community in a truthful account of the past, whereas Kruschkatz views Horn's nearly fanatical effort as a threat to his power. Horn's return and his ability to persuade the townspeople to tell their stories eventually does succeed in exposing the prevailing hypocrisy of Kruschkatz' little political empire. It turns out that Horn's seemingly insignificant job as museum curator becomes the real salvation of the community. Horn modestly yet profoundly states his case while trying to persuade Thomas of the importance of historical accuracy: "Es ist nur ein kleines Museum, das wir hier haben, und doch schreiben auch wir die Geschichte. Wir sind es, die dafür einzustehen haben, ob die Wahrheit oder die Lüge

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berichtet wird"(58).[13] Everyone plays some part in establishing a complete historical record.

Much as Kruschkatz' testimony exposes his shortcomings, each of the other characters lays bare his or her inadequacies. Dr. Spodeck, the town's physician, coerced by his father into setting up a practice in this provincial town, is unable to escape his father's tyranny. When his father dies he no longer has the courage to accept his newly acquired freedom. Instead he becomes, like his father, a hypocrite who despises his family and the people he serves. The only moments of satisfaction left for him are the afternoons he spends alone in his office where he just stares at his vast collection of books, never actually reading any of them. Total isolation from the community provides him the greatest level of satisfaction and comfort.

Frau Fischlinger is completely consumed by her inadequacy as a mother. She is unable to communicate with her son and has no hope of his succeeding at anything. She goes so far as to advise Thomas not to associate with him, for Paul will only negatively influence him. Her life consumed by work in the grocery store left little time to establish any kind of relationship with either her husband or son. Now it leaves her with nothing to occupy her time but petty gossiping and complaining.

These supposedly productive citizens, pillars of the community, provide an external facade sufficient to hide the emptiness in their lives. Only their confessions expose them. The only person in the town who expresses her genuine humanity is ironically severely mentally handicapped, and she is dismissed by the townspeople as insane. Marlene Gohl had escaped being put to death by the Nazis because her mother took her place when they came to take her away. Marlene sees the truth better than those apparently "sane" Guldenberger. She also envisions a future. She has a dream of finding her prince who will love and care for her, but her dream turns into a nightmare of rape, violence and pain. So, even the most innocent and sensitive are tyrannized, underscoring the suffocating effects of the isolation and provincialism of Guldenberg.

The appearance of the gypsies with their great love for life and close family ties is also met by intolerance. For those in power the gypsies represent a threat to the supposedly stable Guldenberg community. Every year their appearance on the meadow is cause for great concern on the part of the townspeople. The momentary disruption

caused by the gypsies' visit threatens the town's banal existence by exposing especially the young people to alternative modes of behavior. However, the climate of confrontation encouraged by officials allows the gypsies only limited interaction with the people of Guldenberg. Only Horn and Mr. Gohl, both outcasts themselves, have any genuine contact with the gypsies. Thus the gypsies contribute only marginally to the alleviation of the existing provincialism and isolation.

With Horn's death the gypsies lose their primary connection to Guldenberg and stop returning to the town. Their departure accelerates the onset of a rampant provincialism. Conformity replaces diversity. With its last creative source gone the town settles into a state of prolonged stagnation. The gypsies, on the other hand, with their strong sense of identity with their own community, will flourish no matter where they might wander, whereas Guldenberg's chances of becoming a thriving community are rather bleak.

One would assume that the residents of this relatively small town would have established a support system that would lead to the achievement of common goals. But unlike the gypsies with their genuine bonds of trust and mutual assistance the people of Guldenberg engage in little or no meaningful interaction. Each person has constructed a shelter that prevents any outside intrusion. Their lives largely consist of protecting their desperate state of affairs. Achievements are measured by deceiving others or themselves, defending their pathetic turf with petty bourgeois values, ideological dogmas, or psychological terror. Rarely does one encounter genuine relationships. Efforts in that direction are either motivated by lust, personal gain, or (as in the case of Marlene Gohl) they are mercilessly shattered. And when such relationships *do* exist, they also occur in isolation. No one in the town could understand the genuine friendship between the gypsies and Marlene's father, nor could they offer any insight into his relationship with his daughter. No one has seen Mr. Gohl's paintings, because he paints them only for himself, and once a year he ventures out of his house only briefly to greet his friends the gypsies. Thus the reader is not allowed access to those few instances where real friendships or love might exist. Instead we observe individuals unable to form a community because of their unwillingness or inability to escape from their isolation for fear of losing sight of their narrow egotistic goals.

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At the end of the novel the cause of Horn's death is still a matter of speculation. One thing is certain: Horn's determination to pursue the truth at all costs has made him both an irritant and a stimulus to the community. The mayor's wife will miss most the weekly lectures and discussions led by Horn, because they were the only momentary escape from the mundane existence in Guldenberg. Like the gypsies, Horn charted his own course. It was based upon the principle of truth. In the end the community, consumed by the pursuit of narrow personal goals had no use for a person like Horn, whose primary goal was to expose their hypocrisy. The people of Guldenberg rejected his effort to be their conscience. Not until thirty years later are they able to atone in the form of memories for their errors and, in doing so, to set in motion a process by which the socialist community might progress once again.

In his novelle *Der fremde Freund* (1982) Hein deals primarily with one character and with a relatively selective segment of GDR society in order to show the existence and effects of alienation. In *Horns Ende* he broadens the field of vision. Rather than a contemporary setting he chooses to examine the same phenomenon by revisiting a time in GDR history that was characterized by the official historians as a time of common struggle to achieve the harmonious communist society. What he finds is not a society moving harmoniously toward communism, but an environment of suspicion, lies, dogma, petty hostilities and limited vision on the part of all social strata, which not only promoted the isolation of each individual, but also contributed to the stagnation of the community as a whole. Rather than interacting and supporting each other, the characters move past one another without ever penetrating each other's realm, and thereby retard the growth of any collective consciousness.

In *Der fremde Freund* one could still argue that the alienation was an isolated occurrence within a socialist society. *Horns Ende* takes a historical journey and shows the pervasiveness of isolation, discontent, and desperation in a supposedly harmonious socialist community in the GDR in the 1950s. The novel is an attempt to reconstruct a history that had been written by those who wanted to preserve the power of the state. As Hein puts it: " Fast jeder Staat der Erde hat Schwierigkeiten mit seiner Vergangenheit und ist daher bemüht, sie für die Gegenwart zu schönen, um sich mit Stolz seiner Geschichte zu versichern und das nationale Bewußtsein zu

stärken"(13).[14] *Horns Ende* is only a small contribution in this effort of setting the historical record straight, and as Hein himself admits much remains to be done: "Noch haben wir unsere eigene Geschichte, die unseres Landes und des Sozialismus und der mit uns verbundenen sozialistischen Staaten nicht ausreichend geschrieben. Und nicht ausreichend geschrieben, heißt: nicht geschrieben, das sollten Literaten wie Geschichtsschreiber wissen. Denn ein mit gewichtigen Lücken entstandenes Gebäude existiert nicht wirklich, mit dem ersten Wind wird es zusammenbrechen"(13).[15]

These words were uttered shortly before the wind did indeed come on November 9, 1989. The debate as to the reasons for the failure of the socialist GDR to construct a viable alternative to the capitalist FRG will become a topic for intense discussion in the future, and works such as *Horns Ende* will provide insights about the formation of a socialist community in the GDR. This debate, which failed to take place in the fifties and runs the risk of being aborted once again by the initial euphoria and the invasion of the "democratic" forces from the Federal Republic of Germany, will eventually have to proceed, and the literary record will become a major source of information and insight. Official GDR history is unreliable, but literary works such as *Horns Ende* provide an insight into the psyche of a community engaged in the unsuccessful struggle to establish a socialist society. *Horns Ende* examines the root causes of where the experiment in the early years might have gone wrong.

Christoph Hein in offering his analysis, demands of the readers that they assess the past record and address on their own the issue of renewal. Hein's intent is to initiate and promote a dialogue about the past. In what had been a closed society his literary strategy had to accommodate the state, even if far less so than in the past, which restricted the debate to relatively small circles of readers and prevented a true public discussion of the issue. In light of recent developments it will be of interest to see if Hein's message will fare better in a free market environment. One could certainly make the case that recent developments have made the need for continuance of the debate about the true history of the GDR all the more urgent, but also all the more complex. However, whether GDR writers will play a part in this debate (as they certainly have done in the past) remains to be seen.

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Notes

All translations are mine.

1. "When one wants to know how it was, in this GDR, one will above all get to know it from literary works. Or better, one will get to know how it also was."
2. "Our interest in English history is the interest in us. Historical consciousness is egocentric; one wants to get to know one's fathers in order to experience oneself."
3. "Hein makes excursions into history, arrives back in the present, reaches even further back and still remains in the present: Now-time is negotiated."
4. "Just look around. That is all very old. Too old to lie. A few stones, a few glass slivers, but the truth. That is not insignificant, my boy."
5. "The truth or the lie, that is an enormous responsibility. He who had really comprehended that would never be able to sleep anymore."
6. "It is obvious that a view of history that always concentrates on the not entirely random 'white spots' of our history would be more than incomplete. Such a view of history would also be deceptive. However, if this warning is used only in order to not correct the admitted omissions in our history, because the danger 'of offending the whole truth' might exist, then this is hypocrisy and demagogic scholasticism."
7. "Thus facet-like a factual and social-psychological picture of a GDR small town of the 50s is created. In the end the picture consists of fragmented figures drawn with discrimination, and of precisely reported and consciously obscured events."
8. In an interview about his novelle *Der fremde Freund*, Hein points out that today literature can not simply assume a pedagogic role in the way Brecht perceived his role as writer. The author can not pretend to be the wise sage who conveys a message to the reader. Hein says: "Ich dagegen, bin nicht klüger als der Leser und kann nur in Dialog mit ihm treten." ("I, on the other hand, am not more intelligent than the reader and can only engage him in dialogue").
9. "Into our memories the present penetrates and the present day is already the last day of the past. Thus we would become uninterruptedly strangers to ourselves without our memories of what we have done, of what has confronted us. Without our memories of ourselves."
10. "Specially produced films and a specially produced history can, to be sure, give us the illusion that everything is prospering splendidly. But such illusions are ultimately deadly, since they make us incapable of coming to grips with our present."
11. "Have you still not comprehended it, boy? You are the one who can't live with the dead. You are the one who must talk about it. The dead have forgotten you, but you can't forget us."
12. "There is no history, because as much as we go about collecting the building blocks of a past time, we arrange and restore to life these little pottery pieces and blackened

photos only with our breath, falsify them with the foolishness of our thin heads and therefore thoroughly misunderstand them. Man created gods in order to be able to live with the insufferability of death, and he created the fiction of history in order to give a meaning to the loss of time, which makes the meaningless comprehensible and bearable."

13. "It is only a small museum that we have here, and yet we too write history. We are the ones who have to be accountable, whether the truth or lies are reported."

14. "Nearly every state on earth has difficulty with its past and is therefore preoccupied with embellishing the present in order to assure itself of its history with pride and strengthen the national consciousness."

15. "We still have not satisfactorily written our own history, the history of our country and of socialism and of the socialist states that are bound to us. And unsatisfactorily written, means: not written. Historians and writers should know that. Because a building created with major omissions does not really exist, with the first wind it will crumble."

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